

THE HERITAGE OF CAIN

A GREAT BIG THRILLING STORY

BY ISABEL OSTRANDER

You Can Begin This Great Story Today By Reading This First

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

At the Adirondack lodge of Dyrat Van Rensselaer and his wife Victoria are gathered Dyrat's brother John, Madge Ashby, a divorcee, Bertman and Lucille Goodall and Philip Merriman. Dyrat, a close student of heredity, tells the party he believes at least one of a criminal's descendants will develop criminal instincts. Victoria shudders at her husband's views and at the idea of having children of her own. Lucille gives Victoria money for a purse unknown to her husband. When Victoria does not appear for breakfast Madge goes to her room and finds her murdered.

Now Read On

CHAPTER IX.—(Continued.)

A

TRANGLING sob rose in his

throat, but he clutched his hands

and fought it back, struggling

with all his weakened forces to

conquer his rising grief and agony.

Yorkie felt a great human wave

of pity sweeping over him for the

man before him—the scholar, the

dreamer of dreams, thrust so suddenly

and with such cruel defensiveness

into the vortex of terrible tragedy and

sorrow.

He invariably sternly eliminated, so

far as possible, every personal

emotion when he clutched his hands

tightly, maintaining a calmly impersonal

exterior and a calculating, freely re-

sponsive attitude of mind. The most

nervous-racking, heart-stirring

scenes, least the cool judgment and

alert watchfulness upon which

much depended should fall him at the

supreme moment.

But just as he had felt drawn to the

brilliant and profound scholar of the

library by his gentleness and enthu-

siasm, so he felt his sympathies go out

to the man now, in his anguish and

nervousness.

He gave him time to partially re-

cover from the unfortunate and un-

lucky situation, then said:

"Mr. Van Rensselaer, I shall soon

have done. With all my sympathy for

the last few days, as clearly as you

can remember them? Did anything

unusual occur during the last few

days? Anything which seemed to you

to be in any way out of the common?"

Dyrat thought a minute, and then

wearily shook his head.

"No," he murmured, and his voice

seemed suddenly to have grown weaker.

As if his effort at self-control had spent

his feeble energy.

"No. Everything seemed to be just as

usual, but then I rarely observe any lit-

tle occurrences in every-day life, I am

so absent-minded. Even the new maid,

who, Robin tells me, just downed the

hall stairs yesterday morning, I took

absolutely no notice of; I doubt if

I even glanced at her."

"I don't know whom she resembles,"

said Dyrat, "but I certainly should never know her

if I saw her again. I am sure, Mr. Yorkie,

that I had a bad witness I am."

"And Mrs. Van Rensselaer on Mon-

day, did she seem happy, contented?"

"She—she was happy and thoughtful,

and seemed to be depressed during the

day, but by evening she was brighter

and more animated, more like her

usual, sparkling self, than she had been

for weeks."

"And now, Mr. Van Rensselaer, one

last question, which will be painful to

you, but which I must ask you to an-

swer. When did you last see Mrs. Van

Rensselaer alive?"

"About 10 o'clock on the evening be-

fore on Monday morning, I excused

myself and went to my study, off the

library, leaving them all in the living

room. Robin, Mr. and Mrs. Goodall,

and Mrs. Ashley were playing

bridge, and my wife was chatting with

Mr. Merriman. I read, and made notes

for two hours."

"I felt unusually tired—I'd been fishing

all day, with Goodall, Merriman,

and my brother-in-law, the latter an

accustomed day spent in the open had

made me sleepy, so at a little after 12

retired for the night. I stood up, and

my wife's door to speak to her, but

with my hand raised to knock, I heard

feminine voices within, and, not wish-

ing to disturb midnight tea-time, I

went on to my own room."

"You heard voices? How many?"

"Only two—my wife and another."

"Have you any idea who the other

might have been? Yorkie's tones were

almost indifferent, but his eyes were

narrowed."

"Oh, yes. It was Mrs. Ashley. I did

not distinguish any words, but she

seemed talking in a low, soothing voice,

with now and then a monosyllabic re-

ply from my wife."

"Did you hear any laughter?"

"Oh, no. Indeed, from the consoling

note in Mrs. Ashley's voice, I gathered

vaguely that my wife must have an

other attack of nerves, and Mrs. Ashley

was quieting and comforting her."

"And that is all you know?"

"Yes. I went to my room, and almost

immediately to sleep."

"You heard nothing during the

night?"

"Nothing. I awoke to find the sun

streaming in my windows. I dressed

and on my way to breakfast I stopped

again at my wife's door."

"Hearing no sound within, I con-

cluded the door was shut, and so

went on down to the veranda, where I

was joined by my brother and Mrs.

Ashley, who had been canceled by the

lake. We waited vainly for my wife to

appear, and finally Mrs. Ashley went

up to her room to see if she was com-

ing down soon—and found her."

"Yorkie rose and held out his hand."

"Yes, I know, Mr. Van Rensselaer. I

won't trouble you any further now

with questions. I think you have told

me everything you can at present that

can be of any use at this stage of the

inquiry, and you must rest and regain

your strength, for you have much be-

fore you, are you leaving for New York

on the noon train?"

Dyrat stood up in surprise.

"My word, here is nearly completed,

and I have learned all I can gather to-

wards the facts. You shall hear from

me on any new developments, and rest

assured that I shall be working every

moment in your behalf. Try not to be

discouraged; events not move for-

ward as quickly as you could wish."

An investigation of this sort may

terminate suddenly, and in a totally un-

foreseen manner at any time or drag

out for weeks in a way which will seem

interminable. We shall be working in

the dark, but we will be making head-

way, be confident of that. Keep the

secretly informed—your brother has my

town address of any events which may

transpire."

I will, Mr. Yorkie. And I want you

to know that I—we all—have the ut-

most confidence in you and your ability.

I shall wait with what patience I can

muster. Only find him for me—the

man who murdered my poor Victoria.

That is all I ask of life now."

When Yorkie re-entered the hall the

others had disappeared. He found

Madge alone on the veranda, sitting back

in a long, low chair, with her eyes wear-

ily closed. They opened slowly at his

approach, and she regarded him with

his face which made her lean forward

suddenly and grip the arms of her chair.

"Mrs. Ashley," he began without any

premise, "when did you last see Mrs.

Van Rensselaer alive?"

"Why?" she hesitated and moistened

her dry lips with her tongue—"when

we said 'good night' and went to our

rooms after the Goodalls and Mr. Mer-

riman had gone."

"I want the truth, please," he said

sternly, his eyes fixed steadily upon

her.

"The truth?—why, I have just told

the truth," she broke off.

"But there is nothing—nothing to tell

you," she protested uncertainly. "It

was merely—that is, nothing occurred

which could have the slightest bearing

on your investigation."

"Will you allow me to be the best

judge of that? Will you believe that in

justice to her and to yourself you

should speak?"

"But I can tell you nothing," she re-

peated. "I see no justice to her in re-

peating a little confidential incident of

absolutely no importance. And as for

justice to myself—She drew herself up

in her chair and her eyes flashed.

"Can you dare to insinuate that I

know anything of the foul murder of

my friend, or of the cause of it, cause

there could be—which led to it?"

"Mrs. Ashley," Yorkie pressed her in-

exorably, "you were the first to discover

the body. You were the first to see it.

You were the last, as far as is yet

known, to have suppressed from the au-

thorities what transpired between you

and Mrs. Van Rensselaer the night of

her death."

She understood his veiled threat, and

sank back in her chair.

"I did not tell the coroner," she mur-

mured, "for the same reason that I did

not mention it to you—that it was a

trivial incident, and had nothing what-

soever to do with the tragedy which ac-

crued."

"I am willing to risk that," he said.

"When you were upstairs, did you ac-

cidentally see Mrs. Van Rensselaer in her

room?"

"No. I—I bade her good night, as I

told you, and then I went to my room

prepared to retire, but feeling unable

to sleep, I sat down to read by a low

light. Mrs. Van Rensselaer came in, and

burst into a passion of weeping."

She succeeded in quieting her after a

time, and when she was fairly calm I

tried to get her to tell me the cause of

her trouble. She insisted that it was

nothing, and was driven by a sense of

nerves, would be quiet all right in the

morning. She was sorry to have dis-

turbed me, and asked me to promise to

say nothing to Dyrat about it, that he

worried so about her, and there was

really nothing in the matter. And that is

all there is to tell."

"I begged and implored her to tell me

if she was really in some trouble, so

that I might help her, but she denied

steadfastly that anything was wrong.

Finally I tucked her into bed and left

her, and when she was fairly calm I

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